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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

28 March 1979

National Intelligence Officers

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director for National
Foreign Assessment

National Intelligence Officer
for Warning

FROM: [REDACTED] 25X1

Assistant National Intelligence
Officer for China

SUBJECT: Monthly Warning Assessment: China

Summary

Community China analysts at our meeting on 21 March were still decompressing from the recent war. The general consensus was that major problems remained in Indochina, but that the situation was much less dangerous than it had been at any time in the past several months. We examined three problems in particular: the possibility of renewed Sino-Vietnamese hostilities as Vietnamese forces built up in the border area; the Kampuchean and Laotian situations as they affect China's perceptions of its interests in Southeast Asia; and the Sino-Soviet border. These issues were generally viewed as continuing, festering problems, but there was little support for the idea that any of them, singly or in combination, were likely to reach flash point in the short term.

1. Possibility of Renewed Sino-Vietnamese Hostilities.
In general community representatives felt that, while the possibility of isolated fire-fights along the border was

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fairly high, that of renewed major hostilities was relatively low. Our assessment was hampered by the recurrent problem that we were unable to establish Vietnamese OB with any certainty, but most analysts thought that even if the Vietnamese buildup was of major proportions Hanoi would still be in no position to attack China, while the Chinese were unlikely to mount a new offensive (as opposed to sporadic border raids) in the absence of a major Vietnamese attack. Most representatives felt that negotiations would take place in the fairly near future, but nearly all thought that they would be very difficult and drawn out. A number of us felt that drawing a boundary in the Tonkin Gulf would be even more difficult than redefining the land border. We discussed briefly the possibility that the Soviets would transport Vietnamese for an attack on the Paracel Islands, but there was little support for this idea.

2. Kampuchea and Laos. The consensus was that things would go on in Kampuchea pretty much as they have been for a number of months--the Vietnamese would be unable fully to control the country but would not give up trying. The possibility that Hanoi might be unable to keep a grip on western Kampuchea was raised, but most representatives appeared to think it was too early to tell. There was general agreement that China would continue to nourish the guerrillas, but most of us thought Beijing found Pol Pot distasteful and would get rid of him if it could. It was recognized this might be impossible, however. Most representatives believed there was little factual basis for charges that the Chinese were preparing to invade Laos. There was general agreement that Beijing had the option of nurturing a renewed guerrilla movement in central Laos (as well as in the border areas), and many of us thought the Chinese would take up this option. No one seemed to think this would result in major Sino-Vietnamese hostilities, however.

3. Sino-Soviet Border. The meeting treated this issue somewhat more summarily than the previous topics; the question of a Soviet attack remained primarily a problem for our Soviet colleagues.

Many of us thought the major problem was the possibility of

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a greatly enhanced Soviet presence in Vietnam, rather than tensions on the common border. Generally representatives believed that Moscow had not yet acquired base rights in Vietnam, but most thought the situation was still fluid and that the final word on the Soviet presence in Vietnam had not yet been written.

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